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Piano Series

A STANDARDIZED TEXT-WORK ON MUSIC

For CONSERVATORIES, COLLEGES PRIVATE TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

A Scientific Basis for the Granting of School Credit for Music Study

POST GRADUATE DIVISION
(GRADE FIVE)

CHAPTER X

PREPARED BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE

National Academy of Music

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X

TONE COLOR IN MELODY AND ACCOMPANIMENT

§1. The distinguishing of color is of course an attribute of the sense of sight, and yet in the analysis of sound, particularly of musical tones, there appears a quality so nearly analogous to that of the shades of the spectrum, that—after the general policy of artists as opposed to scientists—musicians have borrowed and readapted a term belonging to another realm rather than to invent one of their own. Color in music is then something which at least the musician will understand, since he has discovered the quality even before there is felt the need of a word with which to describe it. This color may be of two kinds: tone color in the abstract, a *timbre* —again borrowing from the French—which belongs particularly to single tones or tones of a single pitch; and harmonic color, which is a quality which results from different chord combinations, both as isolated chords and as progressions of chords. The different degrees of tone color are the result of the blending of foundation tone, overtones or harmonics, with false and impure tones, such as must result from the various devices by which tones are produced. Much of the character or individuality of a tone—as of a personality—results from its imperfections rather than from its perfections. If all tones—and all persons—were perfect, they would all be alike; and without variety and without an imaginary vision of perfection beyond our present attainment, what a dreary and monotonous world this would be! Harmonic color, on the other hand, is perhaps the result of the varying degrees of consonance and dissonance between the individual tones which enter into the chord combinations.

It is evident that a melody, whatever the voice in which it appears, must stand out from the accompanying texture with which it is surrounded, and by which it in a measure is supported. Mere loudness will attain this result, and yet the poetry of music can not be revealed by so obvious a means, when there are at hand so many subtle and expressive devices by which to maintain this separation of values. Touch contrasts, while a little less obvious, perhaps, also have been treated in many phases in earlier grades. A contrast of tone COLOR is then the final test of the master pianist. Here is the outlet through which is expressed his own personality; this the inflection of his voice, the refinement—or otherwise—of diction which is his distinguishing trait, and his alone.

How this is to be secured is not capable of imparting; the nearest that one can come to it is perhaps to point out that it does exist, that it must exist, and that it must be sought after until it is found. The mechanical engineer will perhaps figure out and demonstrate that the arrangement of levers by which the piano hammers are actuated is not capable of such shades of force as will secure these contrasts of color, but the pianist knows better. The greater the musicianship possessed by a performer the more perhaps the accompaniment will appear to be subdued in proportion to the melody, and yet it is in the imparting of this contrasting tone color to the various parts that their comparative musical values are so interestingly evidenced.

§2. The expression of sentiment is absolutely indispensable in interpretation, but there is a kind of gushing tenderness which has no place in serious music. There is a decided difference between sentiment and sentimentality, though at times it is but a short step between these two shades of expressiveness, and one's enthusiasm very often influences him to overstep the mark, even unconsciously. On the other hand, many musicians, fearful of too close an approach to the danger line, avoid all expression of tender emotion, and without such expression certain passages become dry and uninteresting. The cultivation of musical taste and discrimination is the safest guide for the pianist who would pursue the proper middle course.

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After all details of structure have been mastered, a comprehension of the underlying emotions to which the composer sought to give expression, and a sincere reflection of one's own reaction to them after serious study, is the ideal basis upon which to build up an interpretation which will be consistent and individual.

NOCTURNE — FREDERIC FRANCOIS CHOPIN

F-SHARP MAJOR, Op. 15, No. 2 [MUSIC ON PAGE FIVE] POLAND: 1809-1849

§3. In the playing of this NOCTURNE the imagination must be drawn upon constantly and insistently. To begin with, the *tempo* is not to be held to metronomic exactness. It must vary in accordance with the demands of the musical expression of each phrase and yet must not approach an exaggerated *tempo* which would be pernicious in its effect. The dynamic indications also offer only a general outline of the many distinctions of tone force which well may be employed, for there are many subtle varieties of tone color and of touch values which cannot be conveyed on paper. The ornamentations require the utmost elegance in performance, and while they permit of much rhythmic elasticity within the count, too marked a disturbance of the larger rhythm of the principal measure pulses must not be produced.

The Septolet in the second *period* (10) in practice may be thought of as divided into a three-note and a four-note group, but this division should not be evident in playing. The ornamental figure into which the right-hand part of the next measure is divided (11) calls for no accents, and all of the tones are to be evenly connected with each other. In the third *period* the ornaments in the right hand (18) (20) should begin exactly with or immediately after the second *eighth* count as marked by the *chord* in the left-hand part—not preceding it.

In practising the *Doppio movimento* division (25) the inner voices should at first be omitted, and the student should count slowly and carefully "ONE, TWO, *and,* THREE, FOUR *and*" in each measure, making sure also to broaden the *sixteenth* notes. When this is accomplished the inner voices should be added so as to make an even group of five in each half measure of the right-hand part. When the accompaniment is added, well-accented though unobtrusive, the duple rhythm may be preserved all the more insistently.

During the climax which begins with the sixth measure (31) of this division, and which reaches its height at the end of the second *period* (39-40), the tone must be full and resonant, but not too brilliant. Unnecessary accentuation should be avoided here as well as during the *crescendo* which has led up to this point, and during the measures which follow.

More brilliance is required for the passage of *thirty-second* notes which is found in the first *period* of the Return (53). The rhythmic motion from here to the close must be more firmly felt than in the beginning, and at no time must it be obscured by the melodic embellishment. Neither the *diminuendo* nor the *rallentando* (56) (58) should be exaggerated, always preserving a dignified relation to the prevailing *tempo* and tone volume.

CAPRICE — ANTON STEPANOVITCH ARENSKY

G MAJOR, Op. 43 [MUSIC ON PAGE NINE] RUSSIA: 1862-1906

§4. Arensky has often been called the Russian Chopin. His music exhibits the fine workmanship and the delicate and almost elusive charm of the great Pole, but it does not possess the depth and intensity of feeling so characteristic of Chopin. All of his piano works are effective mediums for cultivating elegance of style and the refinements of technic. Frequently also they offer very interesting rhythmic problems.

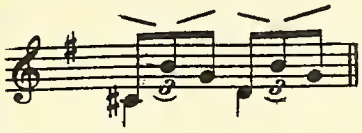
The term Caprice was first used in 1618, by Praetorius, to indicate pieces written in fugal style and in the form of fantasias. Nowadays it is used to designate works which do not follow any set or particular form and which generally possess quaint and original

rhythms and harmonies. The Arensky CAPRICE is a good example of this kind of piece. Its lightness of spirit and its harmonic vagaries aptly carry out the idea of capriciousness.

Lightness of touch, good accentuation and phrasing are essential to a good performance of this piece. Two melodies are carried on simultaneously for the most part, one in each hand, and the harmony is supplied by these melody notes in combination with *broken chord* figures in the right and *chord* tones in the left. The right-hand melody naturally divides into *motives* of three tones. The first of these should be played with a downward movement of the wrist (active movement), and two following ones with the upward movement (passive movement) which results.

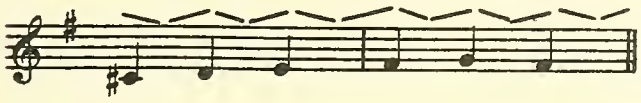
A preliminary exercise for this weight-shifting is shown in Illustration No. 1. The downward-slanting line here indicates the downward or active movement or action, and the upward-slanting line indicates the upward or passive reaction.

Illustration No. 1



As an exercise in horizontal wrist adjustment there can be used the melody tones of the first two measures as shown in Illustration No. 2. The arm here should swing to the left or right as demanded, as quietly and passively as possible, and with the weight of the arm suspended. The playing must be done from the arm, not from the fingers.

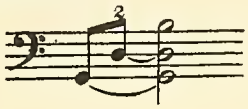
Illustration No. 2



The left-hand part is to be played as *legato* as possible, though the skips are often too wide for a perfect connection without the use of the Damper Pedal. Chords which are too wide for convenient simultaneous grasp (15) should be *arpeggiated,* as shown in Illustration No. 3. Here the arm also swings freely, using the second finger as a pivot.

Toward the end of the Piece the left-hand melody occasionally assumes more importance than usual (57), and the left hand must, accordingly, be given greater prominence than the right-hand part.

Illustration No. 3



Also the left hand itself should be kept well above the right. In the last ten measures certain notes have been printed in small notes to indicate that they may be omitted in performance without in any way sacrificing the effect. It is of interest also to observe that in the edition of Siloti, who was a contemporary of the composer and a pianist of great reputation in Russia, the marks of expression indicate a *fortissimo* ending to the piece.

Special attention also should be devoted to the phrasing of this Piece. The purpose of phrasing indications is to reveal the grammatical construction of the work to be studied, hence the phrase marks—*slurs*—refer to the structure of the musical thought rather than to that of the metre. It is, of course, customary also to use the *slur* for the indication of *legato* touch, as well as to set off the grouping of notes, but in order to avoid confusion here *slurs* have been used only as phrasing marks.

It should be noted that the design of the thematic material is anacrustic (commencing on an up-beat), although in the initial phrase the *arsis* or up-beat is missing and is merely to be understood. While the phrasing thus marked discloses the structure of the Piece, it would be wrong to assume that the beginning of each subdivision of a phrase must be accented. On the contrary, with movements in quick *tempo,* a decided marking of the rhythmic sections should be avoided and the *metrical* accent should predominate. Hence the first tone in each measure should be accented. To proceed otherwise would result in cutting up the material, which would be singularly inappropriate in the performance of a piece where rhythmic placidity and even-

ness is so desirable. It might well be added that correct fingering is also of the utmost importance, here as elsewhere. Only a person accustomed to practising in a thoughtless and mechanical way would attempt to study a piece without first considering the difficulties attendant upon playing an eighty-eight keyed instrument with only ten fingers.

Optional fingering is here occasionally given in parentheses, and duplicate and analogous passages are also fingered. The fingering should be carefully learned before memorizing, so that the student may benefit from having established correct tactile habits.

§5. In pieces of this character the proper use of the so-called Soft Pedal of the grand piano is very important. This pedal is used not merely to play softly, but also to produce a certain tone-color. By playing on two strings, with the third sympathetically responsive, one obtains a different *timbre* throughout all the dynamic registers, than if one were to use the full number of strings. The editor has employed a special sign to indicate the use of the so-called "soft" pedal. This consists of the letter "P" with an oblique line through it, the downward stroke indicating its depression, and the upward stroke its release. Naturally, the use of the Damper Pedal does not conflict with the simultaneous use of the Soft Pedal. The Damper Pedal is indicated by the horizontal lines.

NOVELLETTE — ROBERT ALEXANDER SCHUMANN

E MAJOR, Op. 21, No. 7 [MUSIC ON PAGE THIRTEEN] 1810-1856

§6. This delightful example of Schumann's shorter piano works is as grateful to the virtuoso as it is interesting and beneficial to the student. It demands of the performer great vivacity, sentiment and considerable technical mastery.

The first six notes define the principal *motive* (1), which is given exhaustive melodic and rhythmic development throughout the first section of the composition. While this figure must be clearly enunciated, it should not be too much separated from the larger outline of the full phrase, which offers no definite point of repose before the end of the first complete *period* (16). The canonic working-out of the *motive*—first in *C major* (17) and then in *C minor* (33)—must not seem at all complicated, but must build up logically and irresistibly toward the climax, on the Dominant of *C minor,* in the middle of the third repeated section (48). The short section in *F major* (65) should be treated like an Intermezzo which is suddenly interrupted by the return of the first Theme in the original Key.

The wonderful lyric movement in *A major* (97) may be played somewhat slower, as is indicated—but only a little. It may best be felt in 12-4 (or 4-4) throughout, allowing one pulse for each 3-4 measure. It is better to soften the *B♭* in the descending Bass (108), as it does not help the modulation to *E♯ minor,* and is likely to destroy the mood if strongly emphasized. The succeeding four-measure phrase—first in *G major* (113) and then in *F♯ minor* (117)—should be well-contrasted with the two which follow (121). Here the accompanying notes are fingered for the right hand, while the 'cello-like melody in the Bass is played by the left. This method facilitates lyric delivery.

The attack necessary for a singing tone is a very important matter in this middle section. The color of tone used by a good singer in singing the same composer's *Der Nussbaum* (The Almond Tree) would serve as an excellent model.

The Octave passages in the first and last sections should be practised with free arm and wrist, and as the *tempo* is increased this arm movement will become reduced in proportion. Set the hand at the Octave span, but see that it is free from unnecessary stiffness and keep the wrist loose. The Octave passages should be practised in groups, usually of four measures each, as at the beginning of the Piece. Notice that the Octave passages on white keys are more difficult than those employing both black and white keys. In the skips in the left-hand part, care should be taken NOT to treat the lower tone as a Grace note, but as a harmonic tone, to be sustained with the Pedal.

Edited by
Morton F. Mason
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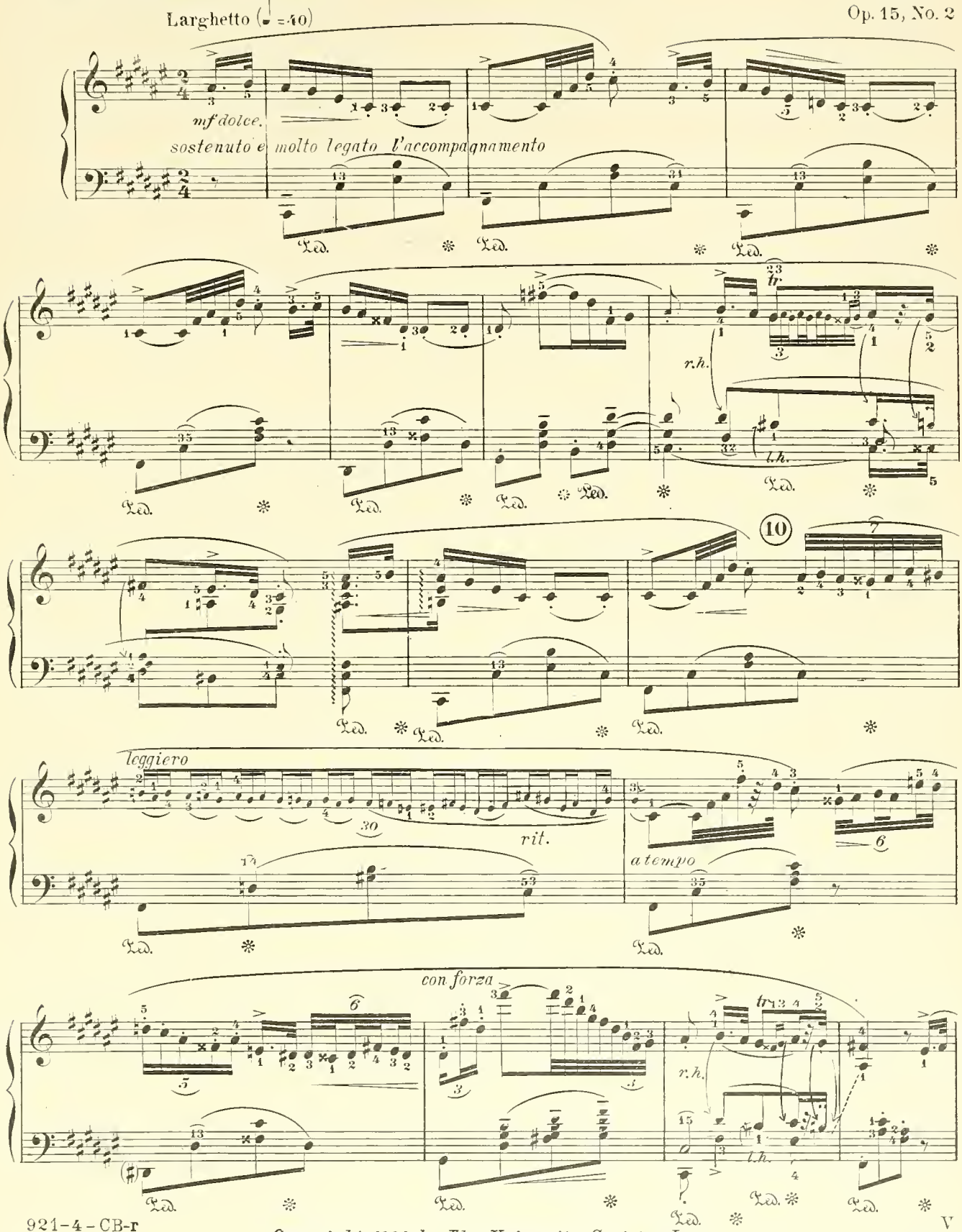
NOCTURNE

F-SHARP MAJOR

CHOPIN
Op. 15, No. 2



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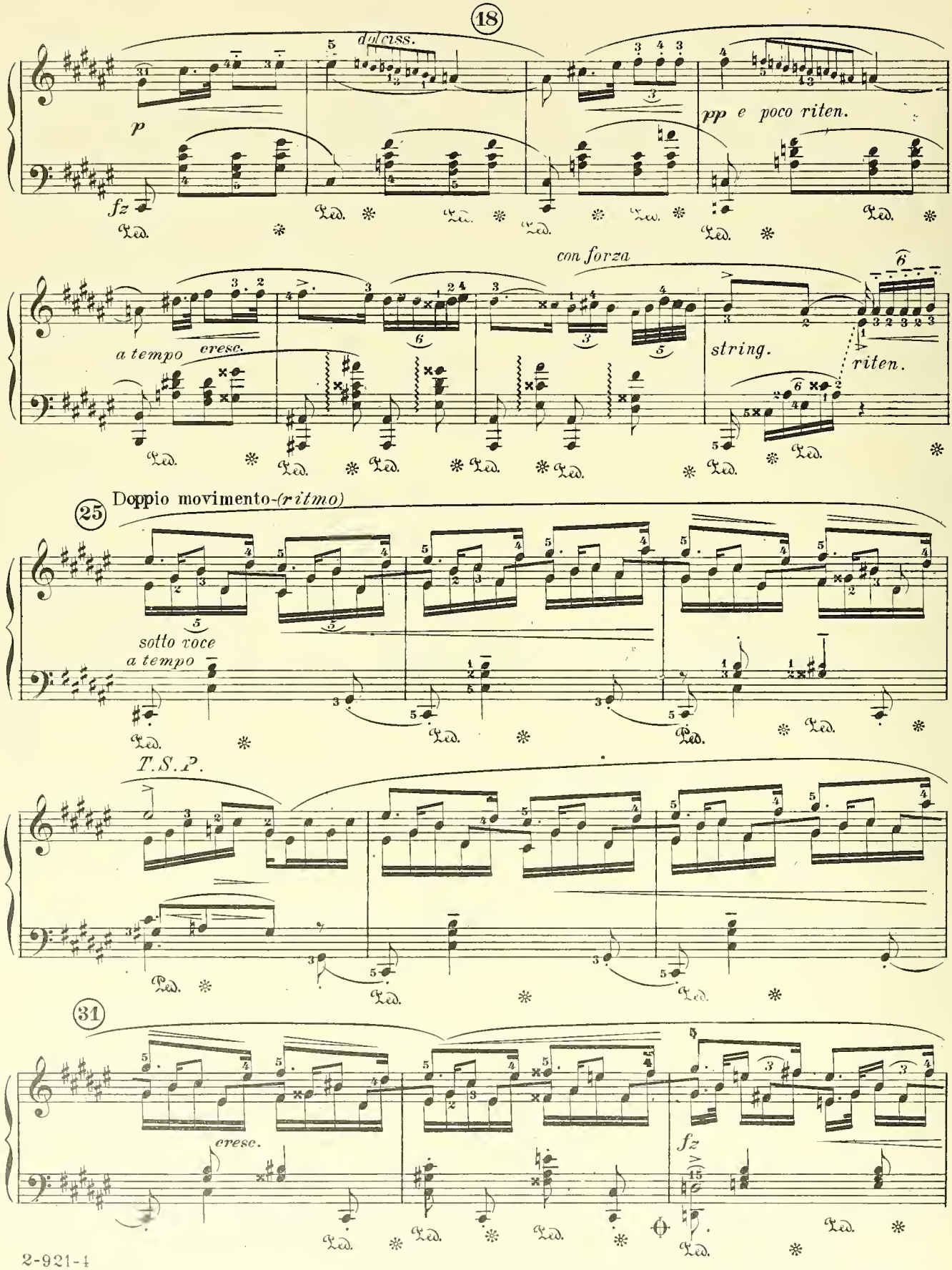
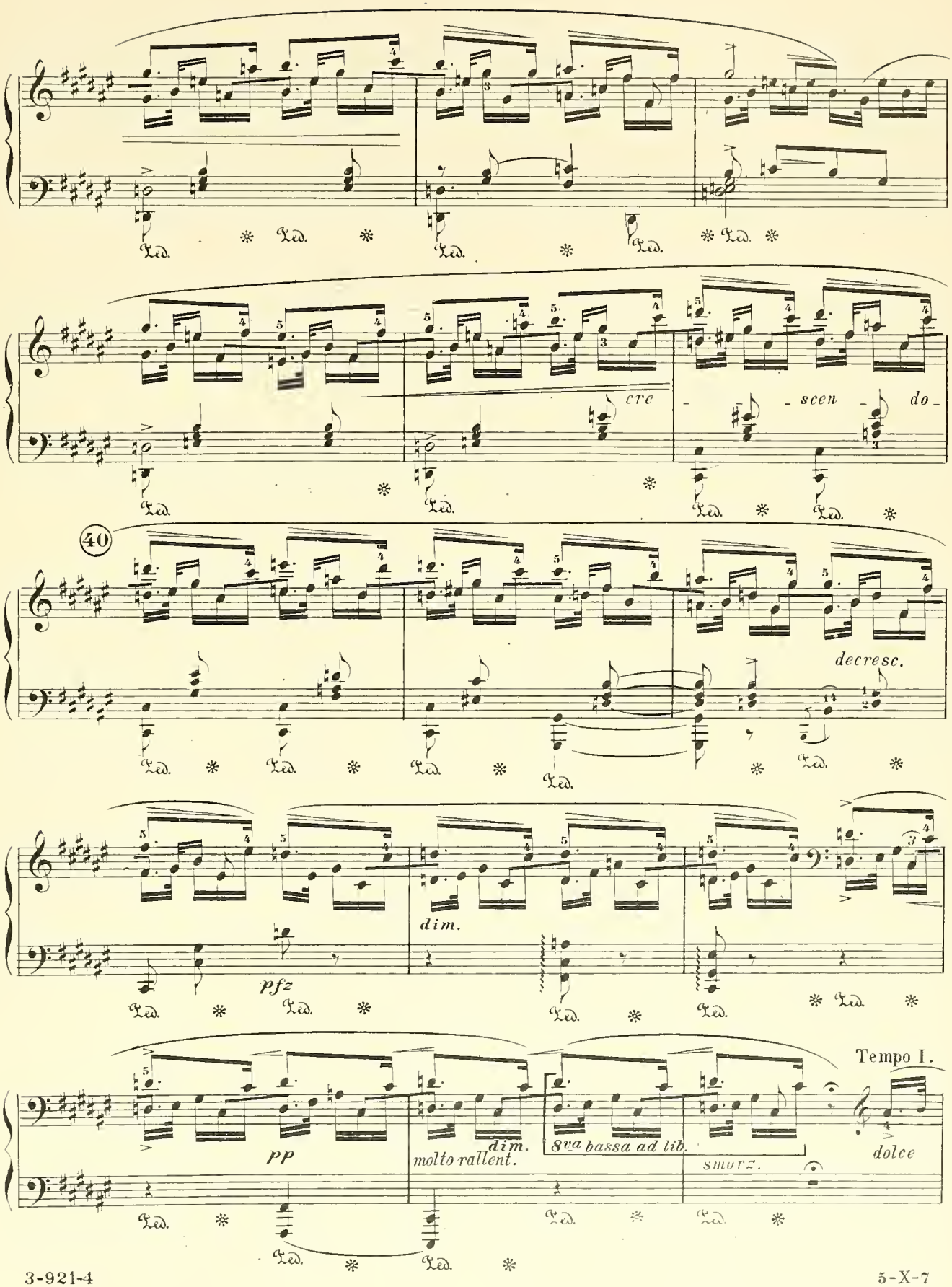
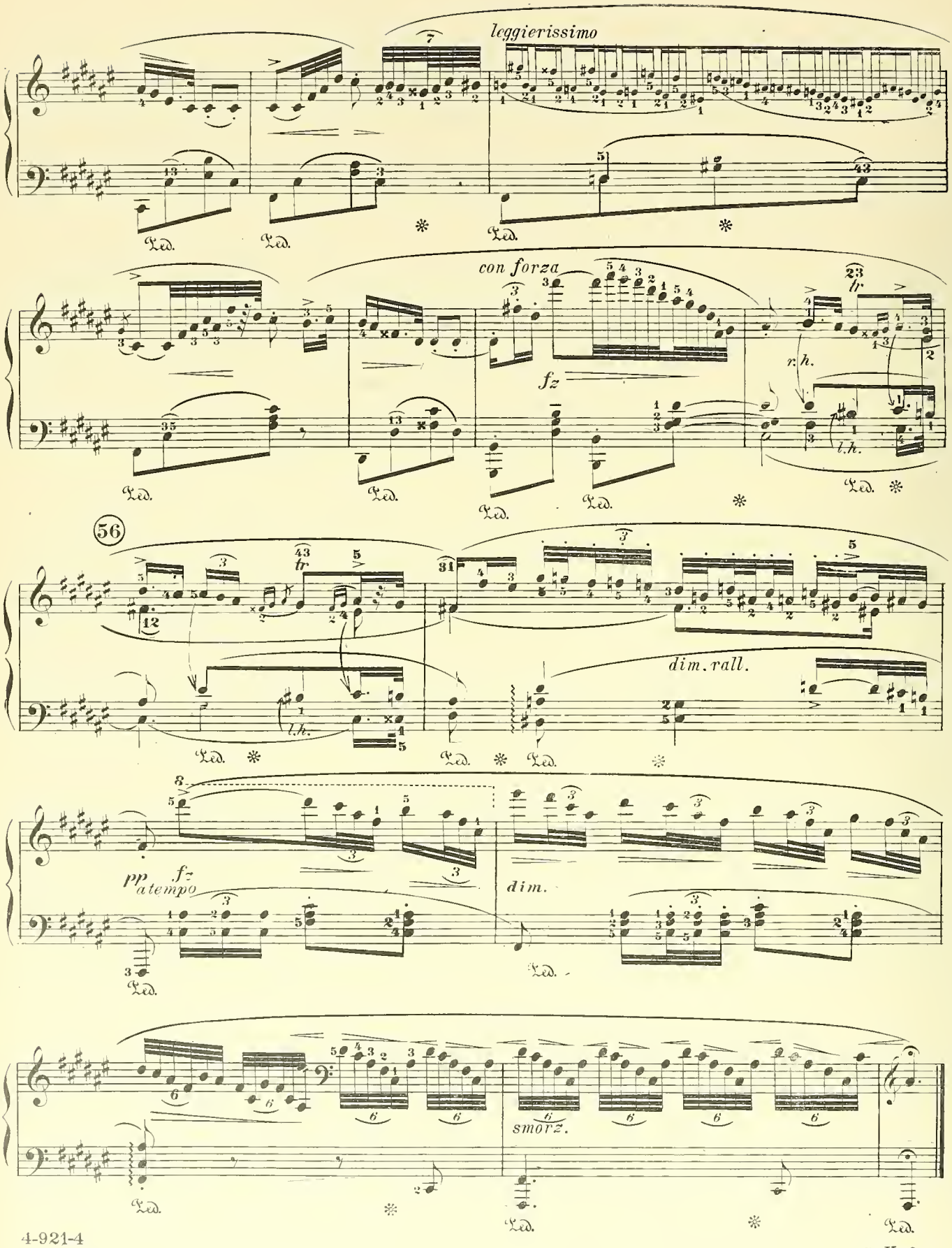

18
dolciss.
p
fz
pp e poco riten.
a tempo
cresc.
con forza
string.
riten.
25
Doppio movimento-(ritmo)
sotto voce
a tempo
T.S.P.
31
cresc.
fz


cre
scen
do
40
decresc.
dim.
pfz
pp
molto rallent.
dim.
8va bassa ad lib.
smorz.
Tempo I.
dolce

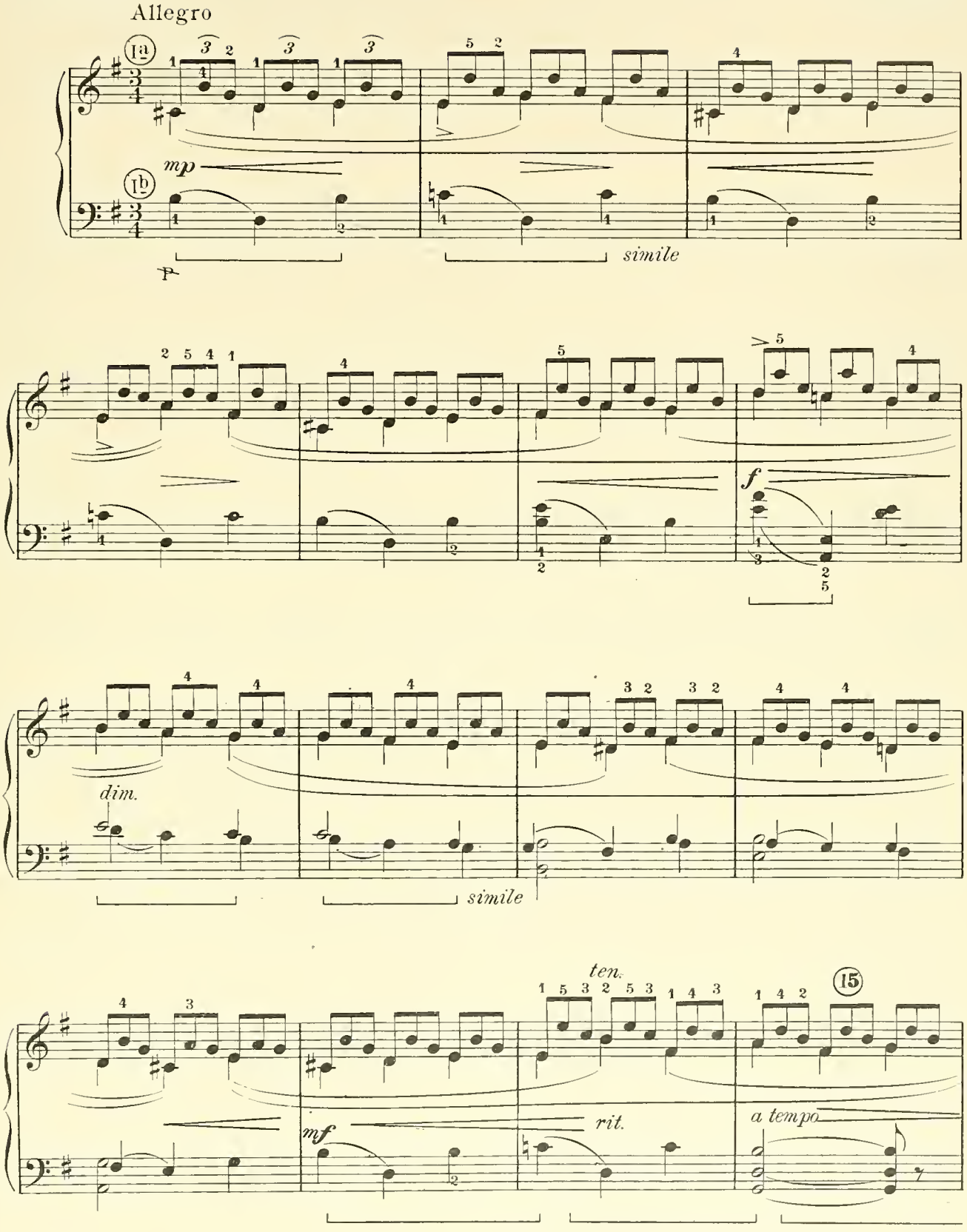

leggierissimo
con forza
fz
r.h.
l.h.
56
dim. rall.
pp
fz
a tempo
dim.
smorz.

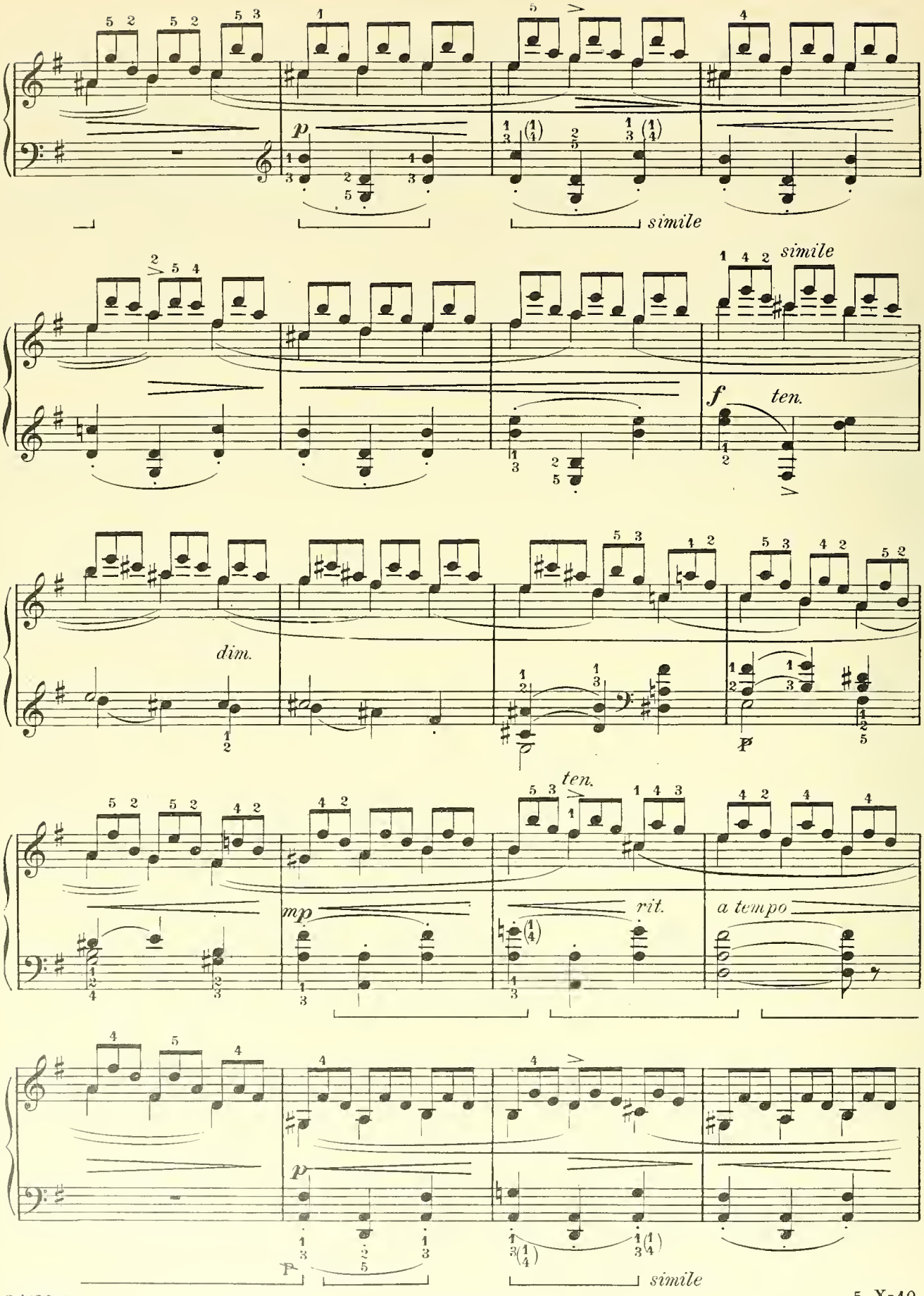
CAPRICE

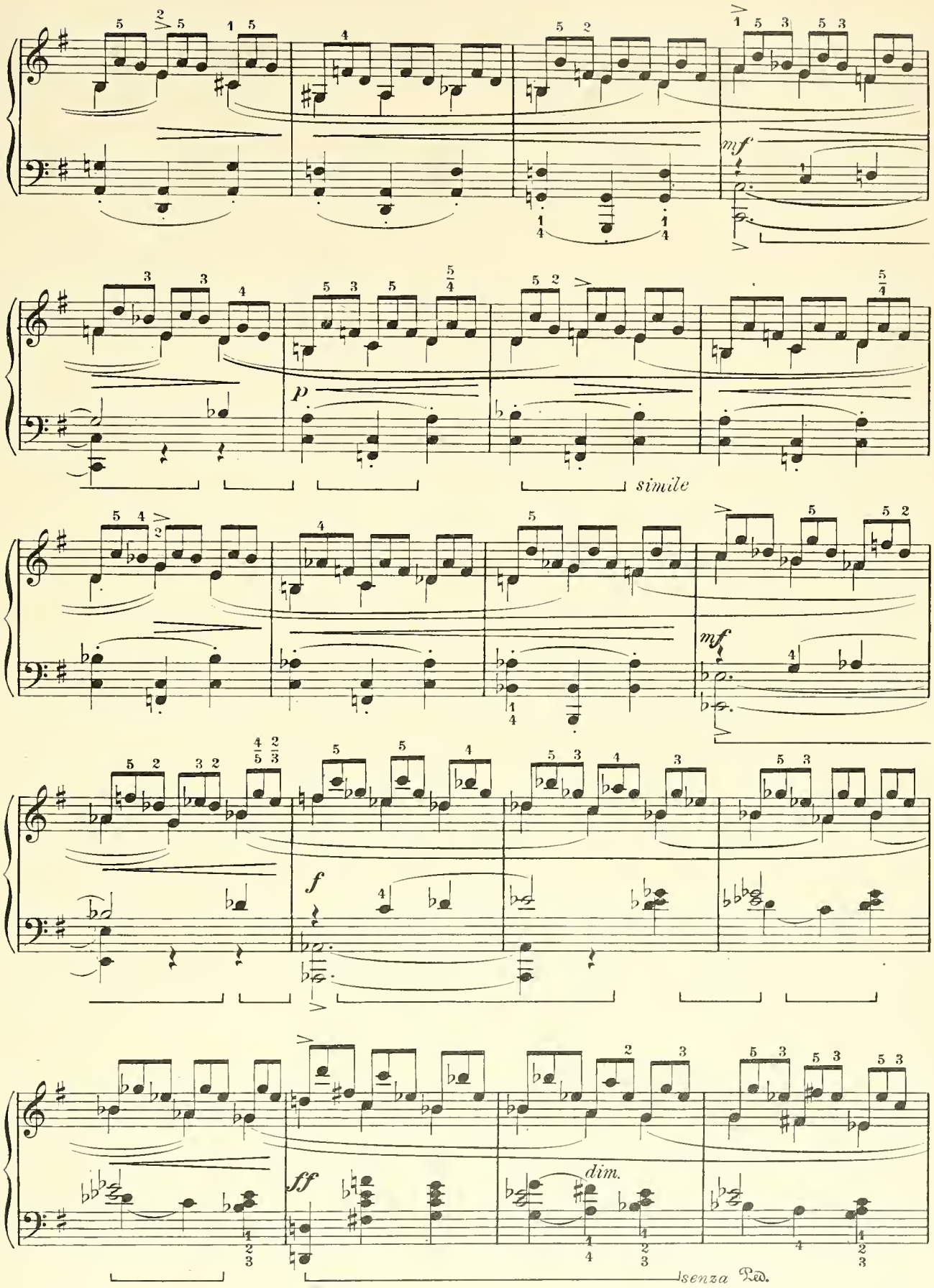
G MAJOR

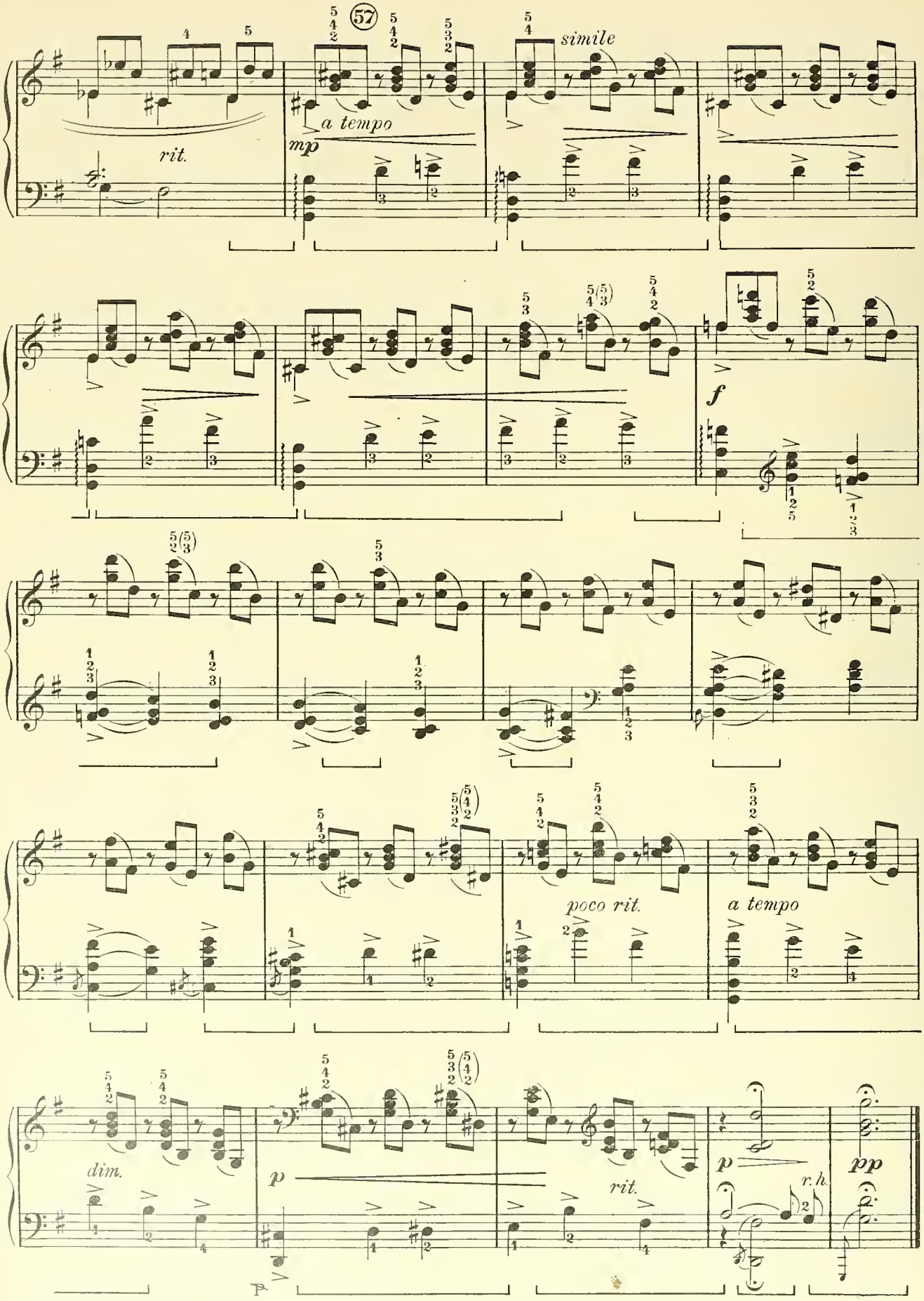
Edited by
Vernon Spencer

ARENSKY
Op. 43, No. 4




p
simile
simile
f
ten.
dim.
p
ten.
mp
rit.
a tempo
p
simile


mf
p
simile
mf
f
ff
dim.
senza Ped.


57
rit.
a tempo
mp
simile
f
poco rit.
a tempo
dim.
p
rit.
p
r.h.
pp

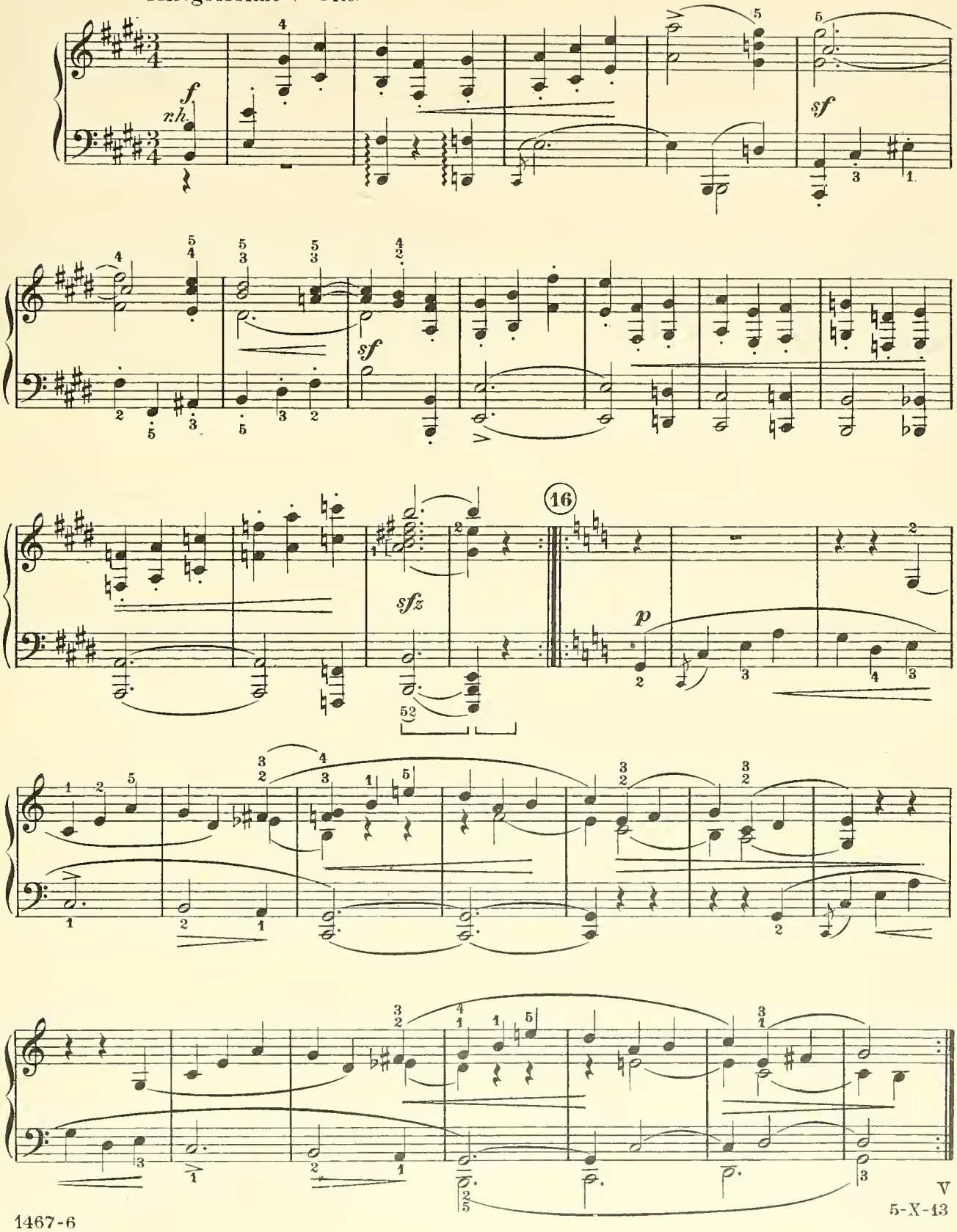
NOVELLETTE

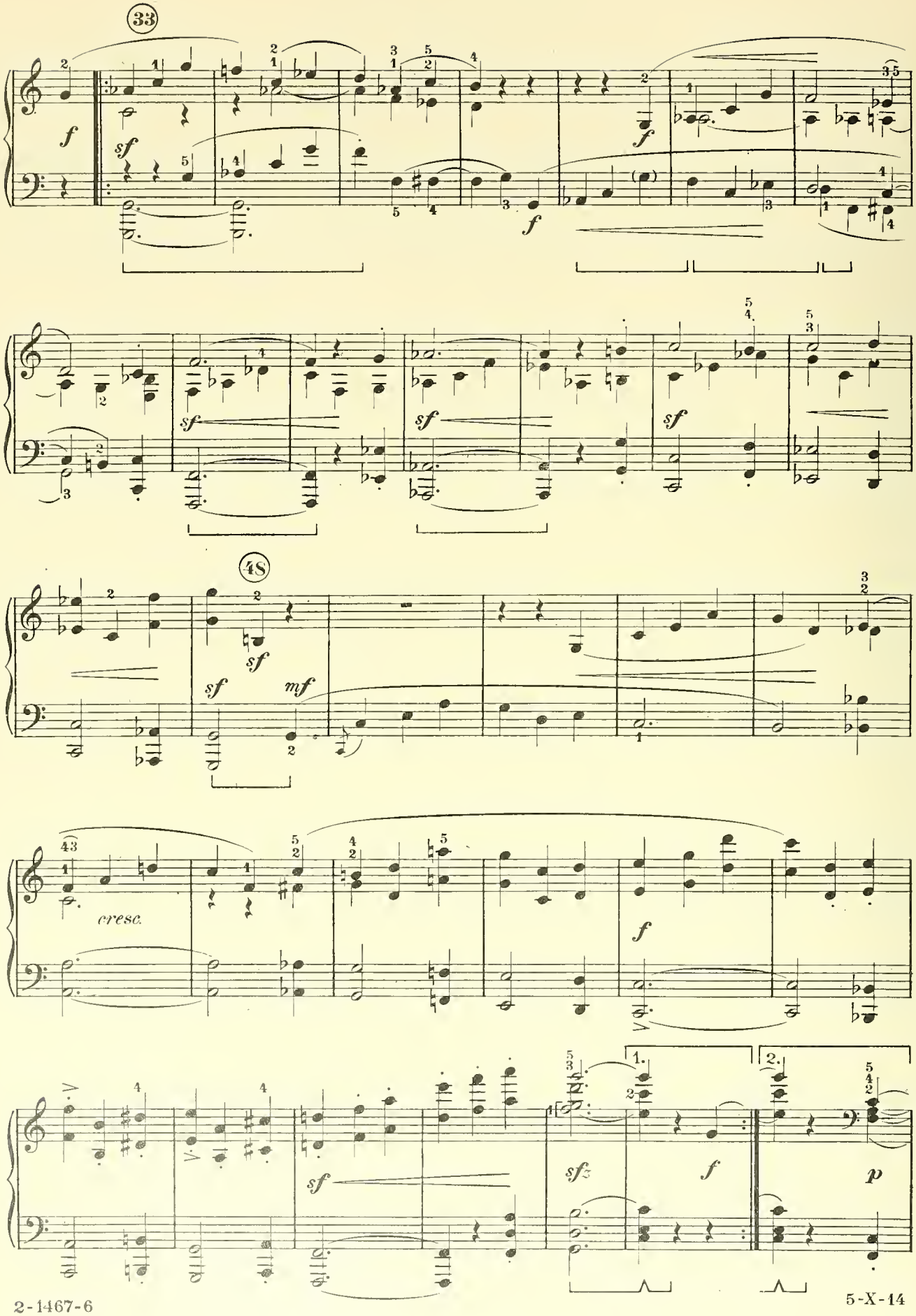
E MAJOR

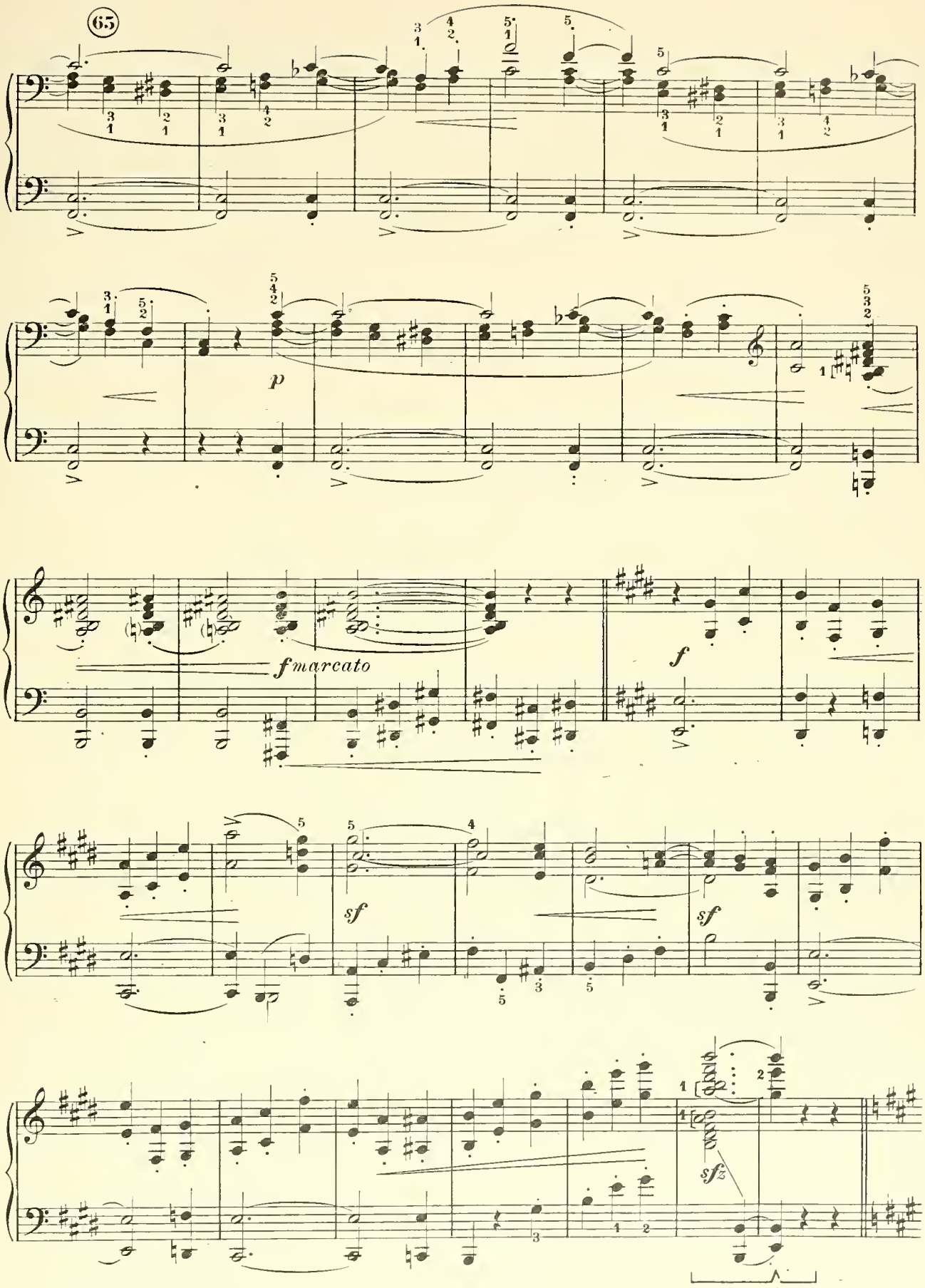
Edited by
Allen Spencer

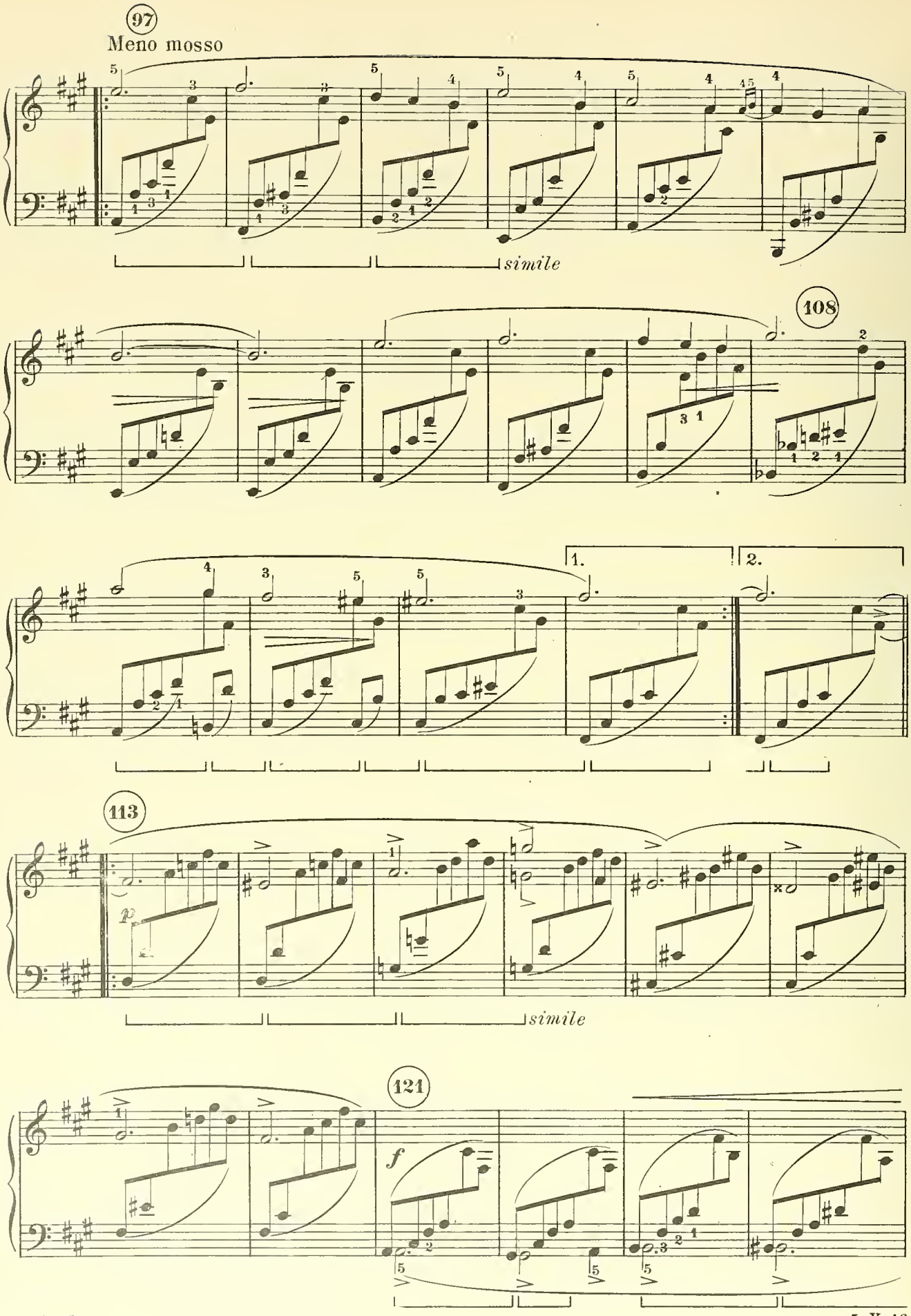
ROBERT SCHUMANN
Op. 21, No. 7

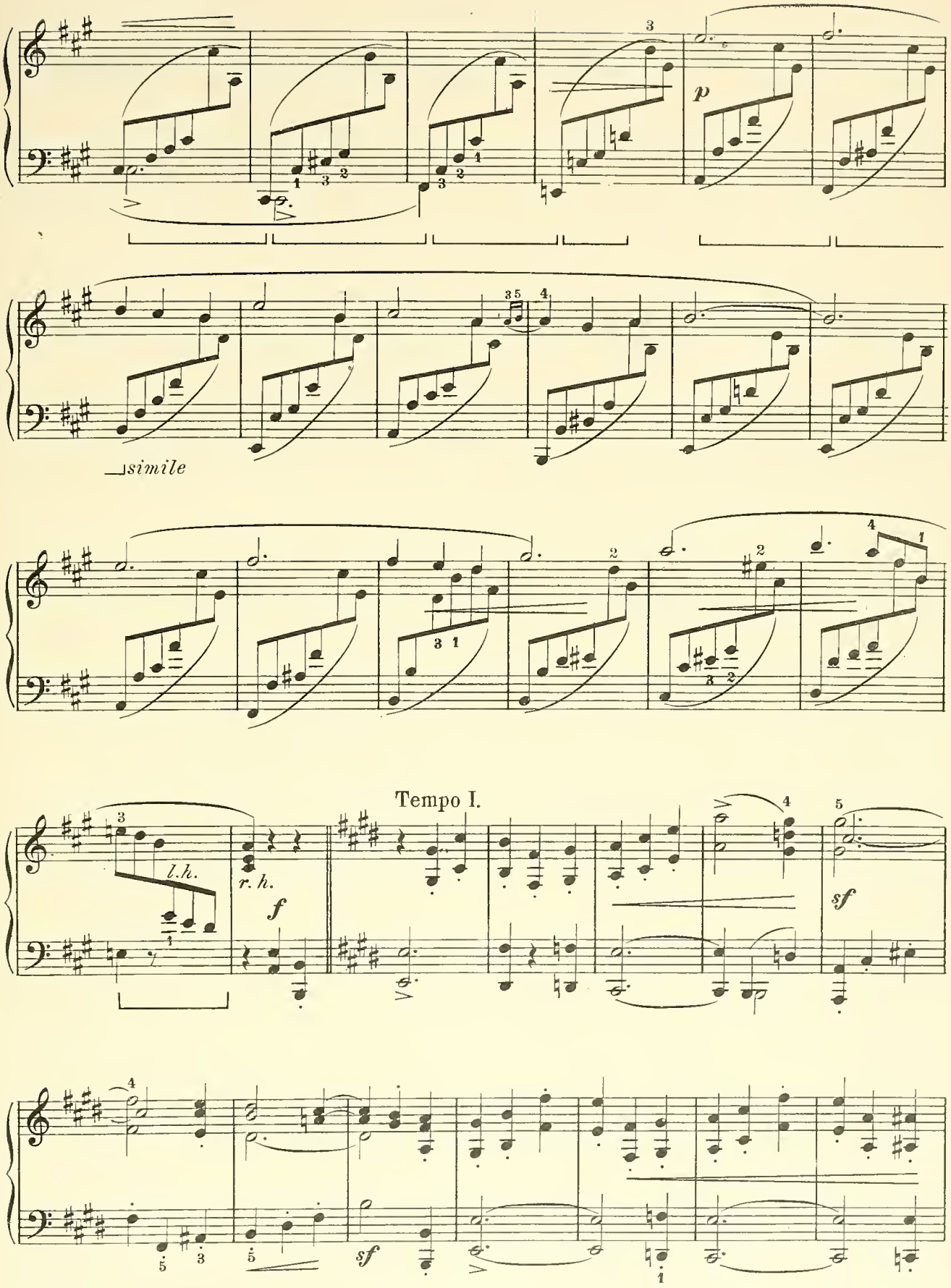
Allegrissimo (♩. = 116)

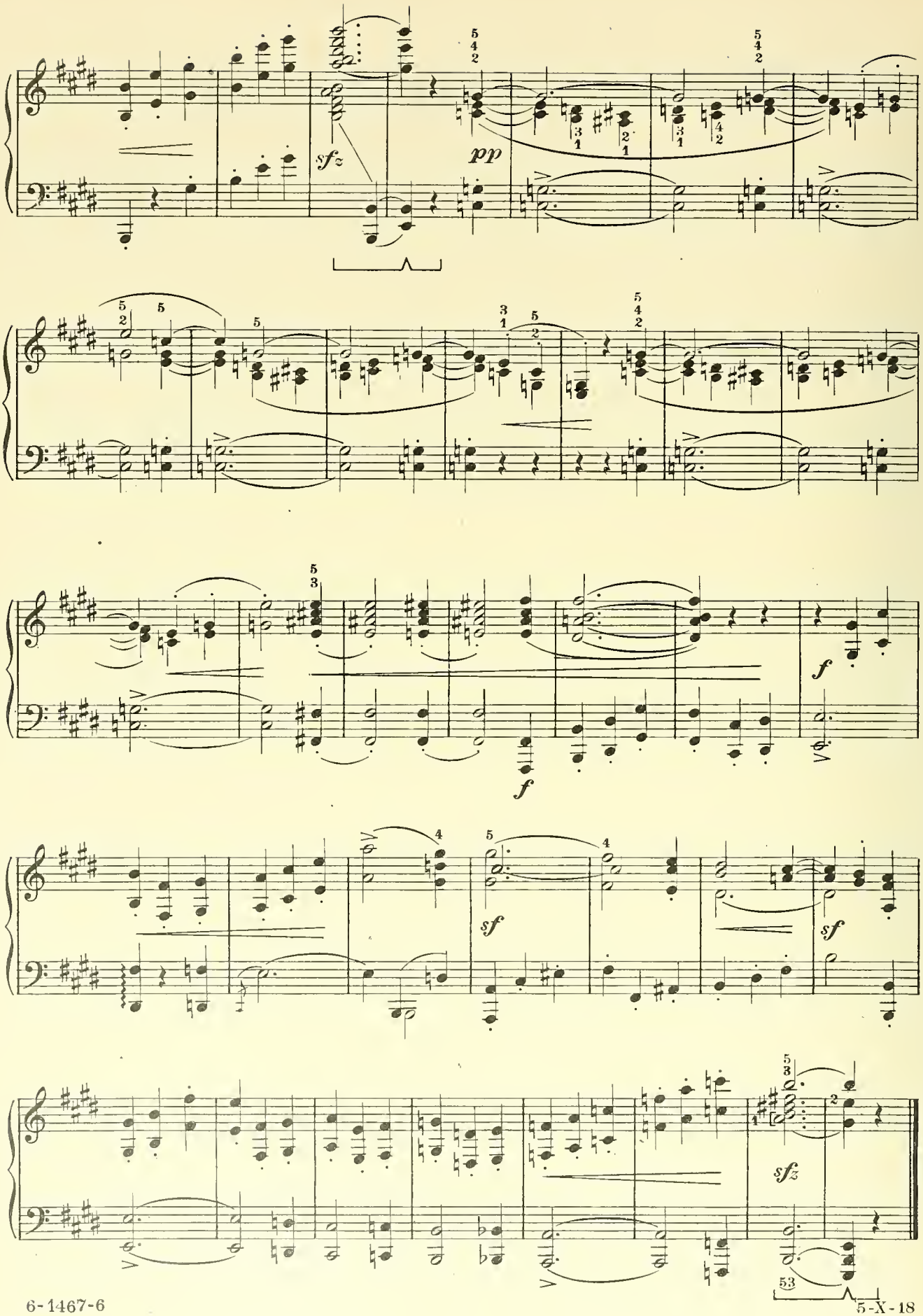



33
f
sf
f
f
sf
sf
sf
48
sf
sf
mf
cresc.
f
sf
sfz
f
p
1.
2.


65
p
f marcato
f
sf
sf
sfz


97
Meno mosso
simile
108
1.
2.
113
p
simile
121
f


p
simile
Tempo I.
l.h.
r.h.
f
sf
sf


sfz
pp
f
f
sf
sf
sfz

MEMORANDA

MEMORANDA

CHAPTER EXAMINATION

1. Give the nationality and the years of birth and death of Arensky.

2. Who first used the term *caprice* in music? When was this?

3. What is the modern meaning of the term?

4. What is the effect of the so-called "soft" pedal upon the tone quality?

5. What are the differences between the Tone Sustaining pedal and the Damper pedal?

6. Compare Arensky's music with that of Chopin.

7. Give an outline of the form of the Arensky CAPRICE.

8. Explain the technic used in playing it? What is tone color? harmonic color?

9. Give your idea of the application of the term *Novellette* to a musical composition.

10. Write from memory some of the distinctive motives of the Schumann NOVELLETTE.

Student Percentage

Examined by Date

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